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Question Time: No phone while driving under 21

Other states expand ban to all ages

**By Rob Burgess
Tribune night editor**

[Editor's note: To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

Indiana House Bill 1394, which took effect July 1, bans all cellphone use (including hands-free devices) behind the wheel for those under 21 unless they are calling 911. Drivers of all ages are still barred from texting while driving, according to the Indiana Department of Motor Vehicles. In other states any cellphone usage (no matter the age) is illegal behind the wheel, except for hands-free devices. Police in San Bernadino, California, have begun using a unique method of catching distracted drivers.

“The next time you pass a panhandler at an intersection, you may want to read their cardboard sign,” reported CBS News’ Ben Tracy reported Aug. 3. “If motorists in the Inland Empire had read the signs instead of their cellphones, they would have escaped a ticket from

officers posing as homeless. ... The officers dress in plain clothes at freeway off-ramps and hold cardboard signs typical of panhandlers. They spot drivers violating traffic laws and use a radio to alert a nearby officer in a patrol car. One sign read: 'S.B. Police [arrows pointing to officer]. I am not homeless. Looking for seat belt and cellphone violations.'"

So, we wanted to know: "What do you think of these laws? Do you support this type of enforcement? Why or why not?"

YOUR ANSWERS

"Apparently, there are so many people who have taken others' lives and injured others by becoming so distracted by cellphones that common sense could not be taught, so it required laws to protect the innocent. We have become a nation of idiots that have to have laws for the lack of common sense reasons. Seat belts do save lives, but I should have a personal choice in the matter because it is my life alone. If I do not wear a seat belt the only life I endanger is mine. To answer the last question as to enforcement, who cares if they stand out there like that? Don't be texting and have your seat belt on when you are driving an interstate and using an off-ramp. Common sense. Just my opinion." — **Joyce Young Everhart**

“I work for a credit card company. You have no idea how many idiots will call me while driving (which requires numerous selections through the automated menu), and attempt to navigate the website WHILE DRIVING. None of these cardholders are teens, either.”

— **Megan Marschand Pierceall**

“I was almost hit head-on by a woman with her head buried in her cellphone texting on my way home a few weeks ago, because she swerved into my lane. Texting/talking while driving is not a teenage problem, it's a problem with people who have a license to drive and zero common sense.” — **Scot Sink**

OUR ANSWERS

“I'm not bothered by officers on off-ramps, if it's an efficient way to keep people from texting, fine. Seat belt tickets are used as revenue for the government. If the government cared about the safety of the people the first place they'd put seat belts is school buses (unless they instead put child safety seats in them! That's another ticket tax.) And the second place they'd mandate more safety gear is motorcycles/mopeds.” — **Pedro Velazco**

“Driving is a privilege and we already have to comply with other laws that limit that privilege in the interest of safety: Wear your seat belt, don't drive intoxicated, etc. To put it bluntly, that's so a driver doesn't

kill someone. A driver using a cellphone can drive as dangerously as someone whose driving is impaired by alcohol, so laws that prohibit cellphone use while driving seem eminently reasonable. And if it takes an officer standing by the side of the road to get people to take the law seriously — an officer identified more clearly than usual, mind you

— then I have no problem with that approach.” — **Sarah Einselen**

“I fully support these laws. Every time I have used my phone while driving I’ve always regretted it, even though I’ve been lucky enough to escape without incident thus far. When I lived in California I was cited (to the tune of around \$180) for talking on my phone behind the wheel. I was incensed at the time, but if they had been utilizing the San Bernadino officers’ tactics I would have said it was fair play. (I mean, it says who they are right there on the sign.) I think what they are doing is hilarious and a great method of nabbing drivers lost in their phones.” — **Rob Burgess**

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